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EASTERN EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCER

20 February 1968

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GRADING AND DECLASSIFICATION

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Radio Moscow Again Raises the Inflammatory Issue of Bessarabia

Bessarabia, now part of the USSR's Moldavian SSR, was "illegally incorporated into the Rumanian Kingdom in January 1918," according to a Rumanian language broadcast by Radio Moscow on 13 February. Laponogov, the Soviet commentator, added that on 23 July 1940, the Rumanian Communist Party declared that "now when the gigantic force of the country of socialism has freed Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina from the heavy yoke of Rumanian imperialism, a real possibility has appeared for friendship between the Rumanian people and the great socialist state." 25X1

COMMENT: Rumanian-Soviet references to Bessarabia have been in very low key since last summer. At that time, Radio Moscow broadcast two somewhat sardonic commentaries on the terra irredenta of Bessarabia as part of a series of "history lectures" commemorating the Soviet jubilee.

What Bucharest might have done to warrant this latest outcry is uncertain. Of two probable causes--Rumanian propaganda broadcasts into Soviet Moldavia or Moscow's continuing problems with Bucharest over renewing their friendship treaty --the latter seems the more likely. Both Bucharest and Moscow use the Bessarabian issue to needle each other.

Oder-Danube Canal Sparks Czechoslovak-Polish Friction

An unusually frank article in the 7 February issue of the Warsaw daily Zycie Warszawy pinpoints the conflicting national interests involved in arranging for construction of the Polish-Czechoslovak link to the planned Oder-Danube canal. The article repeats several times that the link, running almost wholly through Polish territory, would primarily benefit the Czechs, since it would reduce the costs of rail transit to Polish ports. "In other words," the daily adds, "this would reduce our income from Czechoslovak transit across our country."

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The article then proposes that "when the problem of the construction of the canal again comes on the agenda... we should subject it to closer examination, taking into account our own interests." It concludes by calling for "international negotiations" on the subject, to include examination of the "gains and losses" accruing to Poland, and the extent to which "states more interested in the construction of the canal would meet its cost."

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COMMENT: The idea of the Oder-Danube canal was conceived during the reign of Emperor Charles V, but has not been implemented to this day because of conflicting regional interests. Attempts to proceed with the Czechoslovak-Polish link both in the immediate prewar and postwar periods resulted in armed confrontations in the Tesin-Cieszyn area and, to all appearances, the issue remains volatile to this day.

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GDR Diplomatic Initiatives in the Near East Continue

Politburo member Gerhard Grueneberg led an East German party (SED) delegation to Syria on 19 February.

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COMMENT: An East German government delegation visited Syria in January, apparently hoping to capitalize on the then impending resumption of diplomatic relations between West Germany and Yugoslavia and to press the argument that the Hallstein Doctrine is dead. The Syrians, however, agreed only to expand relations in other fields.

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In a speech on 16 February, East German Foreign Minister Otto Winzer claimed that the resumption of relations between Belgrade and Bonn was indicative of the failure of the Hallstein doctrine and urged African, Asian, and Arab countries to extend recognition to the GDR. The East Germans apparently have returned to Damascus to press this line.

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Rumanian Party Delegation Concludes Cuban Visit

Rumanian and Cuban participants reportedly were extremely satisfied with their talks held during 10-17 February, according to AFP sources in Havana. The Rumanian delegation was led by party Presidium member Bodnaras. [REDACTED]

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COMMENT: Talks between the Rumanians and the Cubans undoubtedly centered on next week's meeting of Communist parties in Budapest, which a Rumanian delegation will attend, but which the Cubans will boycott. Like the Yugoslavs, the Cubans probably see in the Rumanian party's attendance a guarantee that the views of non-participating parties will be vigorously championed.

The high-level visit also is the latest evidence of a warming trend in Cuban-Rumanian relations which began anew last fall following the call for a consultative meeting of Communist parties. In addition, the exchange of views is consonant with Bucharest's sharply increased bilateral contacts with ruling and non-ruling Communist and workers' parties since the first of the year.

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